

Ennio Morricone's Once Upon a Time in The West

(Luís Zanforlin)

Ennio Morricone's Once "Upon a Time in The West" main theme is a modern score composed for the famous 1969 western film "Once Upon a Time in The West." The eight minute composition is a series of scenic anecdotes that travels through various arrangements build upon the same *ostinato*. The song closes the sage of a curious stranger who plays an old harmonica, he promises to save a beautiful widow from the hands of an assassin.

The song starts with a harmonica melody supposedly played by the character, slowly a variety of unusual instruments engage on an *ostinato* base that carries throughout the first part of the song. The score constantly jumps through various arrangements, each with a different melodic lead instrument. At the beginning the melody is played by the harmonica, then the electric guitar dominates it, later on a choir takes over. The song then brakes into a slower tempo with a base played by banjos and unknown western string instruments, After a sweet third section guided by the French Horn, the composition ends with a solo vocalist guiding a full orchestra.

The sporadic change between completely different tempo and instrument combinations reminded me of concurrent pop music from the late 60's such as "The Beatles" (Sgt Peppers) and the "Beach Boys" (Good Vibrations), the abrupt emotional shift in those songs were introduced by the producer's ability to record different ensembles in different studios and cut the newly invented magnetic tape into music sessions placing them together into a completely new song.

The first part of the composition is full of mystery and composed as a march, which gives me the impression that it represents the film's main character. The second part of the song is very playful and the use of unconventional instruments gives me the impression that it relates to the secondary character serving comic relief. The final piece with its sweeter melody and traditional arrangement seems to represent the beautiful love interest.

I find the composition to be extremely original with its use of interesting musical textures juxtaposed to the traditional western film it serves. I believe the piece is a very successful score that serves the film with sounds that match its characters and emotional cues appropriate to the story. It is also a very enjoyable composition to listen without the picture making it my new favorite Ennio Morricone composition.